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Halidon Hill; a Dramatic
Sketch, from Scottish
History



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HALIDON HILL;

A

DRAMATIC SKETCH.

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

Price 6s.



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HALIDON HILL;

A

DRAMATIC SKETCH,

FROM

SCOTTISH HISTORY.

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

“Knights, squires, and steeds, shall enter on the stage.”

Essay on Criticism.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO., EDINBURGH;
AND HURST, ROBINSON, AND CO. LONDON.

1822.

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TO

JOANNA BAILLIE,

AT WHOSE INSTANCE THE TASK WAS UNDERTAKEN,

These Scenes are Inscribed,

AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONY OF THE AUTHOR'S

HIGH RESPECT FOR HER TALENTS,

AS WELL AS OF HIS SINCERE

AND FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP.

1557019

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF KING CHARLES THE FIRST

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON

IN TEN VOLUMES

LONDON: Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall.

1742

By Authority, Printed for J. DODD, at the Crown and Anchor, in St. Dun-
stons Church-yard.

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stons Church-yard.

1742

ADVERTISEMENT.

THOUGH the Public seldom takes much interest in such communications, (nor is there any reason why they should,) the Author takes the liberty of stating, that these scenes were commenced with the purpose of contributing to a miscellany projected by a much esteemed friend. But instead of being confined to a scene or two as intended, the work gradually swelled to the size of an independent publication. It is designed to illustrate military antiquities, and the manners of chivalry. The Drama (if it can be termed one) is in no particular either designed or calculated for the stage ; so that, in case any attempt shall be made to pro-

duce it in action, (as has happened in similar cases,) the Author takes the present opportunity to intimate, that it shall be solely at the peril of those who make such an experiment.

The subject is to be found in Scottish history ; but, not to overload so slight a publication with antiquarian research, or quotations from obscure chronicles, may be sufficiently illustrated by the following passage from PINKERTON'S *History of Scotland*, vol. I. p. 71.

“ The Governor (anno 1402) dispatched a considerable force under Murdac, his eldest son ; the Earls of Angus and Moray also joined Douglas, who entered England with an army of ten thousand men, carrying terror and devastation to the walls of Newcastle.

“ Henry IV. was now engaged in the Welch war against Owen Glendour ; but the Earl of Northumberland, and his son, the Hotspur Percy, with the

Earl of March, collected a numerous array, and awaited the return of the Scots, impeded with spoil, near Milfield, in the north part of Northumberland. Douglas had reached Wooler, in his return ; and, perceiving the enemy, seized a strong post between the two armies, called Homildon-hill. In this method he rivalled his predecessor at the battle of Otterburn, but not with like success. The English advanced to the assault, and Henry Percy was about to lead them up the hill, when March caught his bridle, and advised him to advance no farther, but to pour the dreadful shower of English arrows into the enemy. This advice was followed with the usual fortune ; for in all ages the bow was the English weapon of victory, and though the Scots, and perhaps the French, were superior in the use of the spear, yet this weapon was useless after the distant bow had decided the combat. Robert the Great, sensible of this at the battle of Banockburn, ordered a prepared detachment of cavalry to rush

among the English archers at the commencement, totally to disperse them, and stop the deadly effusion. But Douglas now used no such precaution ; and the consequence was, that his people, drawn up on the face of the hill, presented one general mark to the enemy, none of whose arrows descended in vain. The Scots fell without fight, and unrevenge'd, till a spirited knight, Swinton, exclaimed aloud, ‘ O my brave countrymen ! what fascination has seized you to-day, that you stand like deer to be shot, instead of indulging your ancient courage, and meeting your enemies hand to hand ? Let those who will, descend with me, that we may gain victory, or life, or fall like men.’ This being heard by Adam Gordon, between whom and Swinton there existed an ancient deadly feud, attended with the mutual slaughter of many followers, he instantly fell on his knees before Swinton, begged his pardon, and desired to be dubbed a knight by him whom he must now regard as the wisest and the

boldest of that order in Britain. The ceremony performed, Swinton and Gordon descended the hill, accompanied only by one hundred men ; and a desperate valour led the whole body to death. Had a similar spirit been shewn by the Scottish army, it is probable that the event of the day would have been different. Douglas, who was certainly deficient in the most important qualities of a general, seeing his army begin to disperse, at length attempted to descend the hill ; but the English archers, retiring a little, sent a flight of arrows so sharp and strong, that no armour could withstand ; and the Scottish leader himself, whose panoply was of remarkable temper, fell under five wounds, though not mortal. The English men-of-arms, knights, or squires, did not strike one blow, but remained spectators of the rout, which was now complete. Great numbers of Scots were slain, and near five hundred perished in the river Tweed upon their flight. Among the illustrious were Douglas, whose

chief wound deprived him of an eye ; Murdae, son of Albany ; the Earls of Moray and Angus ; and about four gentlemen of eminent rank and power. The chief slain were, Swinton, Gordon, Livingston of Calender, Ramsay of Dalhousie, Walter Sinclair, Roger Gordon, Walter Scott, and others. Such was the issue of the unfortunate battle of Homildon."

It may be proper to observe, that the scene of action has, in the following pages, been transferred from Homildon to Halidon Hill. For this there was an obvious reason, for who would again venture to introduce upon the scene the celebrated Hotspur, who commanded the English at the former battle? There are, however, several coincidences which may reconcile even the severer antiquary to the substitution of Halidon Hill for Homildon. A Scottish army was defeated by the English on both occasions, and under nearly the same circumstances of address on the part of the

victors, and mismanagement on that of the vanquished, for the English long-bow decided the day in both cases. In both cases, also, a Gordon was left on the field of battle; and at Halidon, as at Homildon, the Scots were commanded by an ill-fated representative of the great House of Douglas. He of Homildon was surnamed *Tine-man*, i. e. *Lose-man*, from his repeated defeats and mis-carriages, and, with all the personal valour of his race, seems to have enjoyed so small a portion of their sagacity, as to be unable to learn military experience from reiterated calamity. I am far, however, from intimating, that the traits of imbecility and envy, attributed to the Regent in the following sketch, are to be historically ascribed either to the elder Douglas of Halidon Hill, or to him called *Tine-man*; who seems to have enjoyed the respect of his countrymen, notwithstanding that, like the celebrated Anne de Montmorency, he was either defeated, or wounded, or made

prisoner in every battle which he fought. The Regent of the sketch is a character purely imaginary.

The tradition of the Swinton family, which still survives in a lineal descent, and to which the author has the honour to be related, avers, that the Swinton who fell at Homildon in the manner narrated in the preceding extract, had slain Gordon's father; which seems sufficient ground for adopting that circumstance into the following Dramatic Sketch, though it is rendered improbable by other authorities.

If any reader will take the trouble of looking at Froissart, Fordun, or other historians of the period, he will find, that the character of the Lord of Swinton for strength, courage, and conduct, is by no means exaggerated.

HALIDON HILL.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SCOTTISH.

THE REGENT OF SCOTLAND.

GORDON,	}	<i>Scottish Chiefs and Nobles.</i>
SWINTON,		
LENNOX,		
SUTHERLAND,		
ROSS,		
MAXWELL,		
JOHNSTONE,		
LINDESAY,	}	

ADAM DE VIPONT, *a Knight Templar.*

THE PRIOR OF MAISON-DIEU.

REYNALD, *Swinton's Squire.*

HOB HATTELY, *a Border Moss-Trooper.*

Heralds.

ENGLISH.

KING EDWARD III.

CHANDOS,	}	<i>English and Norman Nobles.</i>
PERCY,		
RIBAUMONT,		

THE ABBOT OF WALTHAMSTOW.

HALIDON HILL.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

The northern side of the eminence of Halidon. The back Scene represents the summit of the ascent, occupied by the Rear-guard of the Scottish Army. Bodies of armed Men appear as advancing from different points to join the main Body.

Enter DE VIPONT and the PRIOR OF MAISON-DIEU.

VIPONT.

No farther, Father—here I need no guidance—
I have already brought your peaceful step
Too near the verge of battle.

PRIOR.

Fain would I see you join some Baron's banner,
Before I say farewell. The honour'd sword
That fought so well in Syria, should not wave
Amid the ignoble crowd.

VIPONT.

Each spot is noble in a pitched field,
So that a man has room to fight and fall on't.
But I shall find out friends. 'Tis scarce twelve years
Since I left Scotland for the wars of Palestine,
And then the flower of all the Scottish nobles
Were known to me ; and I, in my degree,
Not all unknown to them.

PRIOR.

Alas ! there have been changes since that time ;
The Royal Bruce, with Randolph, Douglas, Grahame,
Then shook in field the banners which now moulder
Over their graves i' the chancel.

VIPONT.

And thence comes it,
That while I look'd on many a well-known crest

And blazon'd shield, as hitherward we came,
The faces of the Barons who display'd them
Were all unknown to me. Brave youths they seem'd ;
Yet, surely fitter to adorn the tilt-yard,
Than to be leaders of a war. Their followers,
Young like themselves, seem like themselves unpractised—
Look at their battle-rank.

PRIOR.

I cannot gaze on't with undazzled eye,
So thick the rays dart back from shield and helmet,
And sword and battle-axe, and spear and pennon.
Sure 'tis a gallant show ! The Bruce himself
Hath often conquer'd at the head of fewer
And worse appointed followers.

VIPONT.

Ay, but 'twas Bruce that led them. Reverend Father,
'Tis not the falchion's weight decides a combat ;
It is the strong and skilful hand that wields it.
Ill fate, that we should lack the noble King,
And all his champions now ! Time call'd them not,

For when I parted hence for Palestine,
The brows of most were free from grizzled hair.

PRIOR.

Too true, alas ! But well you know, in Scotland,
Few hairs are silver'd underneath the helmet ;
'Tis cowls like mine which hide them. 'Mongst the laity,
War's the rash reaper, who thrusts in his sickle
Before the grain is white. In threescore years
And ten, which I have seen, I have outlived
Well nigh two generations of our nobles.
The race which holds yon summit is the third.

VIPONT.

Thou may'st outlive them also.

PRIOR.

Heaven forefend !

My prayer shall be, that Heaven will close my eyes,
Before they look upon the wrath to come.

VIPONT.

Retire, retire, good Father !—Pray for Scotland—
Think not on me. Here comes an ancient friend,

Brother in arms, with whom to-day I'll join me.
Back to your choir, assemble all your brotherhood,
And weary Heaven with prayers for victory.

PRIOR.

Heaven's blessing rest with thee,
Champion of Heaven, and of thy suffering country !

[*Exit* PRIOR. VÍPONT *draws a little aside,*
and lets down the beaver of his helmet.

Enter SWINTON, *followed by* REYNALD *and Others, to*
whom he speaks as he enters.

SWINTON.

Halt here, and plant my pennon, till the Regent
Assign our band its station in the host.

REYNALD.

That must be by the Standard. We have had
That right since good Saint David's reign at least.
Fain would I see the Marcher would dispute it.

SWINTON.

Peace, Reynald ! Where the general plants the soldier,
There is his place of honour, and there only

His valour can win worship. Thou'rt of those,
Who would have war's deep art bear the wild semblance
Of some disorder'd hunting, where, pell-mell,
Each trusting to the swiftness of his horse,
Gallants press on to see the quarry fall.
Yon steel-clad Southrons, Reynald, are no deer;
And England's Edward is no stag at bay.

VIPONT (*advancing*).

There needed not, to blazon forth the Swinton,
His ancient burgonet, the sable Boar
Chain'd to the gnarled oak,—nor his proud step,
Nor giant stature, nor the ponderous mace,
Which only he of Scotland's realm can wield:
His discipline and wisdom mark the leader,
As doth his frame the champion. Hail, brave Swinton!

SWINTON.

Brave Templar, thanks! Such your cross'd shoulder
speaks you;
But the closed visor, which conceals your features,
Forbids more knowledge. Umfraville, perhaps——

VIPONT (*unclosing his helmet*).

No ; one less worthy of our sacred Order.

Yet, unless Syrian suns have scorch'd my features

Swart as my sable visor, Alan Swinton

Will welcome Symon Vipont.

SWINTON (*embracing him*).

As the blithe reaper

Welcomes a practised mate, when the ripe harvest

Lies deep before him, and the sun is high.

Thou'lt follow yon old pennon, wilt thou not ?

'Tis tatter'd since thou saw'st it, and the Boar-heads

Look as if brought from off some Christmas board,

Where knives had notch'd them deeply.

VIPONT.

Have with them ne'ertheless. The Stuart's Chequer,

The Bloody Heart of Douglas, Ross's Lymphads,

Sutherland's Wild-cats, nor the royal Lion,

Rampant in golden tressure, wins me from them.

We'll back the Boar-heads bravely. I see round them

A chosen band of lances—some well known to me.

Where's the main body of thy followers ?

SWINTON.

Simon de Vipont, thou dost see them all
That Swinton's bugle-horn can call to battle,
However loud it rings. There's not a boy
Left in my halls, whose arm has strength enough
To bear a sword—there's not a man behind,
However old, who moves without a staff.
Striplings and greybeards, every one is here,
And here all should be—Scotland needs them all ;
And more and better men, were each a Hercules,
And yonder handful centuplied.

VIPONT.

A thousand followers—such, with friends and kinsmen,
Allies and vassals, thou wert wont to lead—
A thousand followers shrunk to sixty lances
In twelve years' space !—And thy brave sons, Sir Alan,
Alas ! I fear to ask.

SWINTON.

All slain, De Vipont. In my empty home
A puny babe lisps to a widow'd mother,

“ Where is my grandsire ? wherefore do you weep ? ”

But for that prattler, Lyulph’s house is heirless.

I’m an old oak, from which the foresters

Have hew’d four goodly boughs, and left beside me

Only a sapling, which the fawn may crush

As he springs over it.

VIPONT.

All slain—alas !

SWINTON.

Ay, all, De Vipont. And their attributes,

John with the Long Spear—Archibald with the Axe—

Richard the Ready—and my youngest darling,

My Fair-haired William—do but now survive

In measures which the grey-hair’d minstrels sing,

When they make maidens weep.

VIPONT.

These wars with England, they have rooted out

The flowers of Christendom. Knights, who might win

The sepulchre of Christ from the rude heathen,

Fall in unholy warfare !

SWINTON.

Unholy warfare ? ay, well hast thou named it ;
But not with England—would her cloth-yard shafts
Had bored their cuirasses ! Their lives had been
Lost like their grandsire's, in the bold defence
Of their dear country—but in private feud
With the proud Gordon, fell my Long-spear'd John,
He with the Axe, and he men call'd the Ready,
Ay, and my Fair-hair'd Will—the Gordon's wrath
Devour'd my gallant issue.

VIPONT.

Since thou dost weep, their death is unavenged ?

SWINTON.

Templar, what think'st thou me ?—See yonder rock,
From which the fountain gushes—is it less
Compact of adamant, though waters flow from it ?
Firm hearts have moister eyes.—They *are* avenged ;
I wept not till they were—till the proud Gordon
Had with his life-blood dyed my father's sword,
In guerdon that he thinn'd my father's lineage,
And then I wept my sons ; and, as the Gordon

Lay at my feet, there was a tear for him,
Which mingled with the rest.—We had been friends,
Had shared the banquet and the chace together,
Fought side by side,—and our first cause of strife,
Woe to the pride of both, was but a light one.

VIPONT.

You are at feud, then, with the mighty Gordon ?

SWINTON.

At deadly feud. Here in this Border-land,
Where the sire's quarrels descend upon the son,
As due a part of his inheritance,
As the strong castle and the ancient blazon,
Where private Vengeance holds the scales of justice,
Weighing each drop of blood as scrupulously
As Jews or Lombards balance silver pence,
Not in this land, 'twixt Solway and Saint Abb's,
Rages a bitterer feud than mine and their's,
The Swinton and the Gordon.

VIPONT.

You, with some threescore lances—and the Gordon
Leading a thousand followers.

SWINTON.

You rate him far too low. Since you sought Palestine,
He hath had grants of baronies and lordships
In the far-distant North. A thousand horse
His southern friends and vassals always number'd.
Add Badenoch kerne, and horse from Dee and Spey,
He'll count a thousand more.—And now, De Vipont,
If the Boar-heads seem in your eyes less worthy,
For lack of followers—seek yonder standard—
The bounding Stag, with a brave host around it ;
There the young Gordon makes his earliest field,
And pants to win his spurs. His father's friend,
As well as mine, thou wert—go, join his pennon,
And grace him with thy presence.

VIPONT.

When you were friends, I was the friend of both,
And now I can be enemy to neither ;
But my poor person, though but slight the aid,
Joins on this field the banner of the two
Which hath the smallest following.

SWINTON.

Spoke like the generous Knight, who gave up all,
Leading and lordship, in a heathen land
To fight a Christian soldier—yet, in earnest,
I pray, De Vipont, you would join the Gordon
In this high battle. 'Tis a noble youth,
So fame doth vouch him,—amorous, quick, and valiant ;
Takes knighthood, too, this day, and well may use
His spurs too rashly in the wish to win them.
A friend like thee beside him in the fight,
Were worth a hundred spears, to rein his valour
And temper it with prudence:—'tis the aged eagle
Teaches his brood to gaze upon the sun,
With eye undazzled.

VIPONT.

Alas, brave Swinton ! Wouldst thou train the hunter
That soon must bring thee to the bay ? Your custom,
Your most unchristian, savage, fiend-like custom,
Binds Gordon to avenge his father's death.

SWINTON.

Why, be it so ! I look for nothing else :
My part was acted when I slew his father,
Avenging my four sons—Young Gordon's sword,
If it should find my heart, can ne'er inflict there
A pang so poignant as his father's did.
But I would perish by a noble hand,
And such will his be if he bear him nobly,
Nobly and wisely on this field of Halidon.

Enter a PURSUIVANT.

PURSUIVANT.

Sir Knights, to council !—'tis the Regent's order,
That knights and men of leading meet him instantly
Before the royal standard. Edward's army
Is seen from the hill-summit.

SWINTON.

Say to the Regent, we obey his orders.

[Exit PURSUIVANT.]

[To REYNALD.] Hold thou my casque, and furl my
pennon up

Close to the staff. I will not shew my crest,
Nor standard, till the common foe shall challenge them.
I'll wake no civil strife, nor tempt the Gordon
With aught that's like defiance.

VIPONT.

Will he not know your features ?

SWINTON.

He never saw me. In the distant North,
Against his will 'tis said, his friends detain'd him
During his nurture—caring not, belike,
To trust a pledge so precious near the Boar-tusks.
It was a natural but needless caution :
I wage no war with children, for I think
Too deeply on mine own.

VIPONT.

I have thought on it, and will see the Gordon
As we go hence to council. I do bear

A cross, which binds me to be Christian priest,
As well as Christian champion. God may grant,
That I, at once his father's friend and yours,
May make some peace betwixt you.

SWINTON.

When that your priestly zeal, and knightly valour,
Shall force the grave to render up the dead.

[Excunt severally.]

SCENE II.

The summit of Halidon Hill, before the Regent's Tent.

The Royal Standard of Scotland is seen in the back ground, with the Pennons and Banners of the principal Nobles around it.

Council of Scottish Nobles and Chiefs. SUTHERLAND, ROSS, LENNOX, MAXWELL, and other Nobles of the highest rank, are close to the REGENT's person, and in the act of keen debate. VIPONT, with GORDON and others, remain grouped at some distance on the right hand of the Stage. On the left, standing also apart, is SWINTON, alone and bare-headed. The Nobles are dressed in Highland or Lowland habits, as historical costume requires. Trumpets, Herald's, &c. are in attendance.

LENNOX.

Nay, Lordings, put no shame upon my counsels.

I did but say, if we retired a little,

We should have fairer field and better vantage.
I've seen King Robert—ay, The Bruce himself—
Retreat six leagues in length, and think no shame on't.

REGENT.

Ay, but King Edward sent a haughty message,
Defying us to battle on this field,
This very hill of Halidon ; if we leave it
Unfought withal, it squares not with our honour.

SWINTON (*apart.*)

A perilous honour, that allows the enemy,
And such an enemy as this same Edward,
To choose our field of battle ! He knows how
To make our Scottish pride betray its master
Into the pitfall.

[*During this speech the debate among the
Nobles seems to continue.*]

SUTHERLAND (*aloud.*)

We will not back one furlong—not one yard,
No, nor one inch ; where'er we find the foe,
Or where the foe finds us, there will we fight him.

Retreat will dull the spirit of our followers,
Who now stand prompt for battle.

ROSS.

My Lords, methinks great Morarchat has doubts,
That, if his Northern clans once turn the seam
Of their check'd hose behind, it will be hard
To halt and rally them.

SUTHERLAND.

Say'st thou, MacDonell?—Add another falsehood,
And name when Morarchat was coward or traitor !
Thine island race, as chronicles can tell,
Were oft affianced to the Southron cause ;
Loving the weight and temper of their gold,
More than the weight and temper of their steel.

REGENT.

Peace, my Lords, ho !

ROSS (*throwing down his Glove.*)

MacDonell will not peace ! There lies my pledge,
Proud Morarchat, to witness thee a liar.

MAXWELL.

Brought I all Nithsdale from the Western Border ;
Left I my towers exposed to foraying England,
And thieving Annandale, to see such misrule ?

JOHNSTONE.

Who speaks of Annandale ? Dare Maxwell slander
The gentle House of Lochwood ?

REGENT.

Peace, Lordings, once again. We represent
The Majesty of Scotland—in our presence
Brawling is treason.

SUTHERLAND.

Were it in presence of the King himself,
What should prevent my saying——

Enter LINDESAY.

LINDESAY.

You must determine quickly. Scarce a mile
Parts our vanguard from Edward's. On the plain,
Bright gleams of armour flash through clouds of dust,

Like stars through frost-mist—steeds neigh, and weapons
clash—

And arrows soon will whistle—the worst sound
That waits on English war.—You must determine.

REGENT.

We are determined. We will spare proud Edward
Half of the ground that parts us.—Onward, Lords ;
Saint Andrew strike for Scotland ! We will lead
The middle ward ourselves, the Royal Standard
Display'd beside us ; and beneath its shadow
Shall the young gallants, whom we knight this day,
Fight for their golden spurs.—Lennox, thou'rt wise,
And wilt obey command—lead thou the rear.

LENNOX.

The rear !—why I the rear ? The van were fitter
For him who fought abreast with Robert Bruce.

SWINTON (*apart.*)

Discretion hath forsaken Lennox too !
The wisdom he was forty years in gathering
Has left him in an instant. 'Tis contagious
Even to witness frenzy.

SUTHERLAND.

The Regent hath determined well. The rear
Suits him the best who counsell'd our retreat.

LENNOX.

Proud Northern Thane, the van were soon the rear,
Were thy disorder'd followers planted there.

SUTHERLAND.

Then, for that very word, I make a vow,
By my broad Earldom, and my father's soul,
That if I have not leading of the van,
I will not fight to-day !

ROSS.

Morarchat ! thou the leading of the van !
Not whilst MacDonell lives.

SWINTON (*apart.*)

Nay, then a stone would speak.

[*Addresses the REGENT.*] May't please your Grace,
And your's, great Lords, to hear an old man's counsel,
That hath seen fights enow. These open bickerings
Dishearten all our host. If that your Grace,
With these great Earls and Lords, must needs debate,

Let the closed tent conceal your disagreement ;
Else 'twill be said, ill fares it with the flock,
If shepherds wrangle, when the wolf is nigh.

REGENT.

The old Knight counsels well. Let every Lord
Or Chief, who leads five hundred men or more,
Follow to council—others are excluded—
We'll have no vulgar censurers of our conduct.—

[*Looking at SWINTON.*

Young Gordon, your high rank and numerous following
Give you a seat with us, though yet unknighted.

GORDON.

I pray you pardon me. My youth's unfit
To sit in council, when that knight's grey hairs
And wisdom wait without.

REGENT.

Do as you will ; we deign not bid you twice.

[*The REGENT, ROSS, SUTHERLAND, LENNOX,
MAXWELL, &c. enter the Tent. The rest
remain grouped about the Stage.*

GORDON (*observing* SWINTON).

That helmetless old Knight, his giant stature,
His awful accents of rebuke and wisdom,
Have caught my fancy strangely. He doth seem
Like to some vision'd form which I have dream'd of,
But never saw with waking eyes till now.
I will accost him.

VIFONT.

Pray you, do not so;
Anon I'll give you reason why you should not.
There's other work in hand——

GORDON.

I will but ask his name. There's in his presence
Something that works upon me like a spell,
Or like the feeling made my childish ear
Doat upon tales of superstitious dread,
Attracting while they chill'd my heart with fear.
Now, born the Gordon, I do feel right well
I'm bound to fear nought earthly—and I fear nought.
I'll know who this man is——

[*Accosts* SWINTON.]

Sir Knight, I pray you, of your gentle courtesy,
To tell your honour'd name. I am ashamed,
Being unknown in arms, to say that mine
Is Adam Gordon.

SWINTON (*shews emotion, but instantly subdues it*).

It is a name that soundeth in my ear
Like to a death-knell—ay, and like the call
Of the shrill trumpet to the mortal lists;
Yet 'tis a name which ne'er hath been dishonour'd,
And never will, I trust—most surely never
By such a youth as thou.

GORDON.

There's a mysterious courtesy in this,
And yet it yields no answer to my question.
I trust, you hold the Gordon not unworthy
To know the name he asks?

SWINTON.

Worthy of all that openness and honour
May shew to friend or foe—but, for my name,
Vipont will shew it you; and, if it sound

Harsh in your ear, remember that it knells there
But at your own request. This day, at least,
Though seldom wont to keep it in concealment,
As there's no cause I should, *you* had not heard it.

GORDON.

'This strange——

VIPONT.

The mystery is needful. Follow me.

[They retire behind the side Scene.]

SWINTON (*looking after them*).

'Tis a brave youth. How blush'd his noble cheek,
While youthful modesty, and the embarrassment
Of curiosity, combined with wonder,
And half suspicion of some slight intended,
All mingled in the flush; but soon 'twill deepen
Into revenge's glow. How slow is Vipont!—
I wait the issue, as I've seen spectators
Suspend the motion even of the eye-lids,
When the slow gunner, with his lighted match,
Approach'd the charged cannon, in the act

To waken its dread slumbers.—Now 'tis out ;
He draws his sword, and rushes towards me,
Who will nor seek nor shun him.

Enter GORDON, withheld by VIPONT.

VIPONT.

Hold, for the sake of heaven !—O, for the sake
Of your dear country, hold !—Has Swinton slain your
father,

And must you, therefore, be yourself a parricide,
And stand recorded as the selfish traitor,
Who, in her hour of need, his country's cause
Deserts, that he may wreak a private wrong ?—
Look to yon banner—that is Scotland's standard ;
Look to the Regent—he is Scotland's general ;
Look to the English—they are Scotland's foe-men !
Bethink thee, then, thou art a son of Scotland,
And think on nought beside.

GORDON.

He hath come here to brave me !—Off !—Unhand me !—

'Thou can'st not be my father's ancient friend,
'That stand'st 'twixt me and him who slew my father.

VIPONT.

You know not Swinton. Scarce one passing thought
Of his high mind was with you; now, his soul
Is fixed on this day's battle. You might slay him
At unawares before he saw your blade drawn.—
Stand still, and watch him close.

Enter MAXWELL from the Tent.

SWINTON.

How go our councils, Maxwell, may I ask?

MAXWELL.

As wild, as if the very wind and sea
With every breeze and every billow battled
For their precedence.

SWINTON.

Most sure they are possess'd! Some evil spirit,
'To mock their valour, robs them of discretion.
Fie, fie, upon't!—O that Dunfermline's tomb

Could render up 'The Bruce ! that Spain's red shore
Could give us back the good Lord James of Douglas !
Or that fierce Randolph, with his voice of terror;
Were here, to awe these brawlers to submission !

VIPONT (*to GORDON*).

Thou hast perused him at more leisure now.

GORDON.

I see the giant form which all men speak of,
The stately port—but not the sullen eye,
Not the blood-thirsty look, that should belong
To him that made me orphan. I shall need
To name my father twice ere I can strike
At such grey hairs, and face of such command ;
Yet my hand clenches on my falchion-hilt,
In token he shall die.

VIPONT.

Need I again remind you, that the place
Permits not private quarrel ?

GORDON.

I'm calm. I will not seek—nay, I will shun it—

And yet methinks that such debate's the fashion.
You've heard how taunts, reproaches, and the lie,
The lie itself, hath flown from mouth to mouth ;
As if a band of peasants were disputing
About a foot-ball match, rather than Chiefs
Were ordering a battle. I am young,
And lack experience ; tell me, brave De Vipont,
Is such the fashion of your wars in Palestine ?

VIPONT.

Such it at times hath been ; and then the Cross
Hath sunk before the Crescent. Heaven's cause
Won us not victory where wisdom was not.—
Behold yon English host come slowly on,
With equal front, rank marshall'd upon rank,
As if one spirit ruled one moving body ;
The leaders, in their places, each prepared
To charge, support, and rally, as the fortune
Of changful battle needs :—then look on ours,
Broken, disjointed, as the tumbling surges
Which the winds wake at random. Look on both,
And dread the issue ;—yet there might be succour.

GORDON.

We're fearfully o'ermatch'd in discipline ;

So even my inexperienced eye can judge.

What succour save in Heaven ?

VIPONT.

Heaven acts by human means. The artist's skill

Supplies in war, as in mechanic crafts,

Deficiency of tools. There's courage, wisdom,

And skill enough, live in one leader here,

As, flung into the balance, might avail

To counterpoise the odds 'twixt that ruled host

And our wild multitude.—I must not name him.

GORDON.

I guess, but dare not ask.—What band is yonder,

Arranged as closely as the English discipline

Hath marshall'd their best files ?

VIPONT.

Know'st thou not the pennon ?

One day, perhaps, thou'lt see it all too closely,—

It is Sir Alan Swinton's.

D

GORDON.

These, then, are his,—the relics of his power ;
Yet worth an host of ordinary men.—
And I must slay my country's sagest leader,
And crush by numbers that determined handful,
When most my country needs their practised aid,
Or men will say, " 'There goes degenerate Gordon ;
" His father's blood is on the Swinton's sword,
" And his is in his scabbard !" [Muscs.

VIPONT (*apart*).

High blood and mettle, mix'd with early wisdom,
Sparkle in this brave youth. If he survive
This evil-omen'd day, I pawn my word,
That, in the ruin which I now forebode,
Scotland has treasure left.—How close he eyes
Each look and step of Swinton ! Is it hate,
Or is it admiration, or are both
Commingled strangely in that steady gaze ?

[SWINTON and MAXWELL *return from the bottom
of the Stage.*

MAXWELL.

The storm is laid at length amongst these counsellors ;—
See, they come forth.

SWINTON.

And it is more than time ;
For I can mark the vanguard archery
Handling their quivers--bending up their bows.

Enter the REGENT and Scottish Lords.

REGENT.

Thus shall it be then, since we may no better :
And, since no Lord will yield one jot of way
To this high urgency, or give the vanguard
Up to another's guidance, we will abide them
Even on this bent ; and as our troops are rank'd,
So shall they meet the foe. Chief, nor Thane,
Nor Noble, can complain of the precedence
Which chance has thus assign'd him.

SWINTON (*apart*).

O, sage discipline,
That leaves to chance the marshalling of a battle !

GORDON.

Move him to speech, De Vipont.

VIPONT.

Move *him*!—Move whom?

GORDON.

Even him, whom, but brief space since,
My hand did burn to put to utter silence.

VIPONT.

I'll move it to him.—Swinton, speak to them,
They lack thy counsel sorely.

SWINTON.

Had I the thousand spears which once I led,
I had not thus been silent. But men's wisdom
Is rated by their means. From the poor leader
Of sixty lances, who seeks words of weight?

GORDON (*steps forward*).

Swinton, there's that of wisdom on thy brow,
And valour in thine eye, and that of peril
In this most urgent hour, that bids me say,—
Bids me, thy mortal foe, say,—Swinton, speak,
For King and Country's sake!

SWINTON.

Nay, if that voice commands me, speak I will ;

It sounds as if the dead lays charge on me.

REGENT,

(To LENNOX, with whom he has been consulting).

'Tis better than you think. This broad hill-side

Affords fair compass for our power's display,

Rank above rank rising in seemly tiers ;

So that the rear-ward stands as fair and open——

SWINTON.

As e'er stood mark before an English archer.

REGENT.

Who dares to say so?—Who is't dare impeach

Our rule of disciple?

SWINTON.

A poor Knight of these Marches, good my Lord ;

Alan of Swinton, who hath kept a house here,

He and his ancestry, since the old days

Of Malcolm, called the Maiden.

REGENT.

You have brought here, even to this pitched field,

In which the royal Banner is display'd,
I think some sixty spears, Sir Knight of Swinton :
Our musters name no more.

SWINTON.

I brought each man I had ; and Chief, or Earl,
Thane, Duke, or dignitary, brings no more :
And with them brought I what may here be useful—
An aged eye ; which, what in England, Scotland,
Spain, France, and Flanders, hath seen fifty battles,
And ta'en some judgment of them ; a stark hand too,
Which plays as with a straw with this same mace,—
Which if a young arm here can wield more lightly,
I never more will offer word of counsel.

LENNOX.

Hear him, my lord ; it is the noble Swinton—
He hath had high experience.

MAXWELL.

He is noted
The wisest warrior 'twixt the Tweed and Solway,—
I do beseech you hear him.

JOHNSTONE.

Ay, hear the Swinton—hear stout old Sir Alan ;
Maxwell and Johnstone both agree for once.

REGENT.

Where's your impatience now ?
Late you were all for battle, would not hear
Ourselves pronounce a word—and now you gaze
On yon old warrior, in his antique armour,
As if he were arisen from the dead,
To bring us Bruce's counsel for the battle.

SWINTON.

'Tis a proud word to speak ; but he who fought
Long under Robert Bruce, may something guess,
Without communication with the dead,
At what he would have counsel'd.—Bruce had bidden ye
Review your battle-order, marshall'd broadly
Here on the bare hill-side, and bidden you mark
Yon clouds of Southron archers, bearing down
To the green meadow-lands which stretch beneath—
The Bruce had warn'd you, not a shaft to-day

But shall find mark within a Scottish bosom,
If thus our field be order'd. The callow boys,
Who draw but four-foot bows, shall gall our front,
While on our mainward, and upon the rear,
The cloth-yard shafts shall fall like death's own darts,
And, though blind men discharge them, find a mark.
Thus shall we die the death of slaughter'd deer,
Which, driven into the toils, are shot at ease
By boys and women, while they toss aloft
All idly and in vain their branchy horns,
As we shall shake our unavailing spears.

REGENT.

Tush, tell not me ! If their shot fall like hail,
Our men have Milan coats to bear it out.

SWINTON.

Never did armourer temper steel on stithy
That made sure fence against an English arrow ;
A cobweb gossamer were guard as good
Against a wasp-sting.

REGENT.

Who fears a wasp-sting ?

SWINTON.

I, my Lord, fear none ;

Yet should a wise man brush the insect off,

Or he may smart for it.

REGENT.

We'll keep the hill ; it is the vantage ground

When the main battle joins.

SWINTON.

It ne'er will join, while their light archery

Can foil our spear-men and our barbed horse.

To hope Plantagenet would seek close combat

When he can conquer riskless, is to deem

Sagacious Edward simpler than a babe

In battle-knowledge. Keep the hill, my Lord,

With the main body, if it is your pleasure ;

But let a body of your chosen horse

Make execution on yon waspish archers.

I've done such work before, and love it well ;

If 'tis your pleasure to give me the leading,

The dunes of Sherwood, Inglewood, and Weardale

Shall sit in widowhood and long for venison,
And long in vain. Whoe'er remembers Bannockburn,—
And when shall Scotsman, till the last loud trumpet,
Forget that stirring word!—knows *that* great battle
Even thus was fought and won.

LENNOX.

This is the shortest road to bandy blows;
For when the bills step forth and bows go back,
Then is the moment that our hardy spearmen,
With their strong bodies, and their stubborn hearts,
And limbs well knit by mountain exercise,
At the close tug shall foil the short-breathed Southron.

SWINTON.

I do not say the field will thus be won;
The English host is numerous, brave, and loyal;
Their Monarch most accomplish'd in war's art,
Skill'd, resolute, and wary——

REGENT.

And if your scheme secure not victory,
What does it promise us?

SWINTON.

This much at least,—

Darkling we shall not die ; the peasant's shaft,
Loosen'd perchance without an aim or purpose,
Shall not drink up the life-blood we derive
From those famed ancestors, who made their breasts
This frontier's barrier for a thousand years.
We'll meet these Southron bravely hand to hand,
And eye to eye, and weapon against weapon ;
Each man who falls shall see the foe who strikes him.
While our good blades are faithful to the hilts,
And our good hands to these good blades are faithful,
Blow shall meet blow, and none fall unavenged—
We shall not bleed alone.

REGENT.

And this is all
Your wisdom hath devised ?

SWINTON.

Not all ; for I would pray you, noble Lords,
(If one, among the guilty guiltiest, might),

For this one day to charm to ten hours rest
The never-dying worm of deadly feud,
That gnaws our vexed hearts—think no one foe
Save Edward and his host—days will remain,
Ay, days by far too many will remain,
To avenge old feuds or struggles for precedence ;—
Let this one day be Scotland's.—For myself,
If there is any here may claim from me
(As well may chance) a debt of blood and hatred,
My life is his to-morrow unresisting,
So he to-day will let me do the best
That my old arm may achieve for the dear country
That's mother to us both.

[GORDON *shews much emotion during this
and the preceding speech of SWINTON.*

REGENT.

It is a dream—a vision !—If one troop
Rush down upon the archers, all will follow,
And order is destroy'd—we'll keep the battle-rank
Our fathers wont to do. No more on't.—Ho !
Where be those youths seek knighthood from our sword ?

HERALD.

Here are the Gordon, Somerville, and Hay,
And Hepburn, with a score of gallants more.

REGENT.

Gordon, stand forth.

GORDON.

I pray your Grace, forgive me.

REGENT.

How ! seek you not for knighthood ?

GORDON.

I do thirst for't.

But, pardon me—'tis from another sword.

REGENT.

It is your Sovereign's,—seek you for a worthier ?

GORDON.

Who would drink purely, seeks the secret fountain,
How small soever—not the general stream,
Though it be deep and wide. My Lord, I seek
The boon of knighthood from the honour'd weapon
Of the best knight, and of the sagest leader,

That ever graced a ring of chivalry.

—Therefore, I beg the boon on bended knee,

Even from Sir Alan Swinton. [*Kneels.*]

REGENT.

Degenerate boy ! Abjeet at once and insolent !—

See, Lords, he kneels to him that slew his father !

GORDON (*starting up.*)

Shame be on him who speaks such shameful word !

Shame be on him whose tongue would sow dissension,

When most the time demands that native Scotsmen

Forget each private wrong !

SWINTON (*interrupting him.*)

Youth, since you crave me

To be your sire in chivalry, I remind you

War has its duties, Office has its reverence ;

Who governs in the Sovereign's name is Sovereign,—

Crave the Lord Regent's pardon.

GORDON.

You task me justly, and I crave his pardon,

[*Bows to the REGENT.*]

His and these noble Lords'; and pray them all
Bear witness to my words.—Ye noble presence,
Here I remit unto the Knight of Swinton
All bitter memory of my father's slaughter,
All thoughts of malice, hatred, and revenge;
By no base fear or composition moved,
But by the thought, that in our country's battle
All hearts should be as one. I do forgive him
As freely as I pray to be forgiven,
And once more kneel to him to sue for knighthood.

SWINTON (*affected, and drawing his sword.*)

Alas! brave youth, 'tis I should kneel to you,
And, tendering thee the hilt of the fell sword
That made thee fatherless, bid thee use the point
After thine own discretion. For thy boon—
Trumpets be ready—In the Holiest name,
And in Our Lady's and Saint Andrew's name,

[*Touching his shoulder with the sword.*]

I dub thee Knight! Arise, Sir Adam Gordon!

Be faithful, brave, and O be fortunate,
Should this ill hour permit !

[*The trumpets sound ; the Heralds cry,*
“ *Largesse ;*” *and the Attendants shout,*
“ *A Gordon ! A Gordon !*”

REGENT.

Beggars and flatterers ! Peace, peace, I say !
We'll to the Standard ; knights shall there be made
Who will with better reason crave your clamour.

LENNOX.

What of Swinton's counsel ?
Here's Maxwell and myself think it worth noting.

REGENT (*with concentrated indignation.*)

Let the best knight, and let the sagest leader,—
So Gordon quotes the man who slew his father,—
With his old pedigree and heavy mace,
Essay the adventure if it pleases him,
With his fair threescore horse. As for ourselves,
We will not peril aught upon the measure.

GORDON.

Lord Regent, you mistake ; for if Sir Alan
Shall venture such attack, each man who calls
The Gordon chief, and hopes or fears from him,
Or good or evil, follows Swinton's banner
In this achievement.

REGENT.

Why, God ha' mercy ! This is of a piece.
Let young and old e'en follow their own counsel,
Since none will list to mine.

ROSS.

The Border cockerel fain would be on horseback ;
'Tis safe to be prepared for fight or flight :
And this comes of it to give Northern lands
To the false Norman blood.

GORDON.

Hearken, proud Chief of Isles ! Within my stalls
I have two hundred horse ; two hundred riders
Mount guard upon my castle, who would tread
Into the dust a thousand of your Redshanks,
Nor count it a day's service.

E

SWINTON.

Hear I this
From thee, young man, and on the day of battle?
And to the brave MacDonnell?

GORDON.

'Twas he that urged me; but I am rebuked.

REGENT.

He crouches like a leash-hound to his master!

SWINTON.

Each hound must do so that would head the deer—
'Tis mongrel curs which snatch at mate or master.

REGENT.

Too much of this.—Sirs, to the Royal Standard!
I bid you, in the name of good King David.
Sound trumpets—sound for Scotland and King David!

[*The REGENT and the rest go off, and the
Scene closes. Manent GORDON, SWINTON,
and VIPONT, with REYNALD and followers.
LENNOX follows the REGENT; but returns
and addresses SWINTON.*

LENNOX.

O, were my western horsemen but come up,
I would take part with you !

SWINTON.

Better that you remain.

They lack discretion ; such grey head as yours
May best supply that want.

Lennox, mine ancient friend, and honour'd lord,
Farewell, I think, for ever !

LENNOX.

Farewell, brave friend !—and farewell, noble Gordon,
Whose sun will be eclipsed even as it rises !—
The Regent will not aid you.

SWINTON.

We will so bear us, that as soon the blood-hound
Shall halt, and take no part, what time his comrade
Is grappling with the deer, as he stand still,
And see us overmatch'd.

LENNOX.

Alas ! thou dost not know how mean his pride is,
How strong his envy.

SWINTON.

Then will we die, and leave the shame with him.

[*Exit* LENNOX.

VIPONT (*to* GORDON.)

What ails thee, noble youth ? What means this pause ?—

Thou dost not rue thy generosity ?

GORDON.

I have been hurried on by a strong impulse,

Like to a bark that scuds before the storm,

Till driven upon some strange and distant coast,

Which never pilot dream'd of.—Have I not forgiven ?

And am I not still fatherless !

SWINTON.

Gordon, no ;

For while we live, I am a father to thee.

GORDON.

Thou, Swinton ?—no !—that cannot, cannot be.

SWINTON.

Then change the phrase, and say, that while we live,

Gordon shall be my son.—If thou art fatherless,

Am I not childless too ? Bethink thee, Gordon,

Our death-feud was not like the household fire,
Which the poor peasant hides among its embers,
To smoulder on, and wait a time for waking.
Ours was the conflagration of the forest,
Which, in its fury, spares nor sprout nor stem,
Hoar oak, nor sapling—not to be extinguish'd,
Till Heaven, in mercy, sends down all her waters.
But, once subdued, it's flame is quench'd for ever ;
And Spring shall hide the track of devastation,
With foliage and with flowers.—Give me thy hand.

GORDON.

My hand and heart !—And freely now—to fight !

VIPONT.

How will you act ? [*To SWINTON.*] The Gordon's band
and thine

Are in the rearward left, I think, in scorn.

Ill post for them who wish to charge the foremost !

SWINTON.

We'll turn that scorn to vantage, and descend
Sidelong the hill—some winding path there must be
O, for a well-skill'd guide !

HOB HATTELY *starts up from a Thicket.*

HOB.

So here he stands.—An ancient friend, Sir Alan.

Hob Hattely, or, if you like it better,

Hob of the Heron Plume, here stands your guide.

SWINTON.

An ancient friend?—A most notorious knave,

Whose throat I've destined to the dodder'd oak

Before my castle, these ten months and more.

Was it not you, who drove from Simprim-mains,

And Swinton-quarter, sixty head of cattle?

HOB.

What then? if now I lead your sixty lances

Upon the English flank, where they'll find spoil

Is worth six hundred beeves?

SWINTON.

Why, thou canst do it, knave. I would not trust thee

With one poor bullock; yet would risk my life,

And all my followers, on thine honest guidance.

HOB.

There is a dingle, and a most discreet one,

(I've trod each step by star-light), that sweeps round
The rearward of this hill, and opens secretly
Upon the archers' flank.—Will not that serve
Your present turn, Sir Alan ?

SWINTON.

Bravely, bravely !

GORDON.

Mount, sirs, and cry my slogan.
Let all who love the Gordon follow me !

SWINTON.

Ay, let all follow—but in silence follow.
Scare not the hare that's couchant on her form—
The cushat from her nest—brush not, if possible,
The dew-drop from the spray—
Let no one whisper, until I cry, " Havoc !"
Then shout as loud's ye will.—On, on, brave Hob ;
On, thou false thief, but yet most faithful Scotsman !

END OF ACT FIRST.

A C T II.

SCENE I.

A rising Ground immediately in front of the Position of the English Main Body. PERCY, CHANDOS, RIBAUMONT, and other English and Norman Nobles are grouped on the Stage.

PERCY.

The Scots still keep the hill—The sun grows high.
Would that the charge would sound !

CHANDOS.

Thou scent'st the slaughter, Percy.—Who comes here ?

Enter the ABBOT OF WALTHAMSTOW.

Now, by my life, the holy priest of Walthamstow,

Like to a lamb among a herd of wolves !

See, he's about to bleat.

ABBOT.

The King, methinks, delays the onset long.

CHANDOS.

Your general, Father, like your rat-catcher,

Pauses to bait his traps, and set his snares.

ABBOT.

The metaphor is decent.

CHANDOS.

Reverend sir,

I will uphold it just. Our good King Edward

Will presently come to this battle-field,

And speak to you of the last tilting match,

Or of some feat he did a twenty years since ;

But not a word of the day's work before him.

Even as the artist, sir, whose name offends you,

Sits prosing o'er his can, until the trap fall,

Announcing that the vermin are secured,

And then 'tis up, and on them.

PERCY.

Chandos, you give your tongue too bold a licence.

CHANDOS.

Percy, I am a necessary evil.

King Edward would not want me, if he could,

And could not, if he would. I know my value.

My heavy hand excuses my light tongue.

So men wear weighty swords in their defence,

Although they may offend the tender shin,

When the steel-boot is doff'd.

ABBOT.

My Lord of Chandos,

This is but idle speech on brink of battle,

When Christian men should think upon their sins ;

For as the tree falls, so the trunk must lie,

Be it for good or evil. Lord, bethink thee,

'Thou hast withheld from our most reverend house,

'The tithes of Everingham and Settleton ;

Wilt thou make satisfaction to the Church

Before her thunders strike thee ? I do warn thee

In most paternal sort.

CHANDOS.

I thank you, Father, filially.

Though but a truant son of Holy Church,

I would not chuse to undergo her censures,

When Scottish blades are waving at my throat.

I'll make fair composition.

ABBOT.

No composition ; I'll have all or none.

CHANDOS.

None, then—'Tis soonest spoke.—I'll take my chance,

And trust my sinful soul to Heaven's mercy,

Rather than risk my worldly goods with thee—

My hour may not be come.

ABBOT.

Impious—impenitent—

PERCY.

Hush ! the King—the King !

*Enter KING EDWARD, attended by BALIOL, and
others.*

KING (*apart to CHANDOS.*)

Hark hither, Chandos !—Have the Yorkshire archers
Yet join'd the vanguard ?

CHANDOS.

They are marching thither.

KING EDWARD.

Bid them make haste, for shame—send a quick rider.—
The loitering knaves, were it to steal my venison,
Their steps were light enough.—How now, Sir Abbot ?
Say, is your Reverence come to study with us
The princely art of war ?

ABBOT.

I've had a lecture from my Lord of Chandos,
In which he term'd your Grace a rat-catcher.

KING EDWARD.

Chandos, how's this ?

CHANDOS.

O, I will prove it, sir !—These skipping Scots
Have changed a dozen times 'twixt Bruce and Baliol,
Quitting each House when it began to totter ;
They're fierce and cunning, treacherous, too, as rats,
And we, as such, will smoke them in their fastnesses.

KING EDWARD.

These rats have seen your back, my Lord of Chandos,
And noble Percy's too.

PERCY.

Ay ; but the mass which now lies weltering
On yon hill side, like a Leviathan
That's stranded on the shallows, then had soul in't,
Order and discipline, and power of action.
Now 'tis a headless corpse, which only shews,
By wild convulsions, that some life remains in't.

KING EDWARD.

True, they had once a head ; and 'twas a wise
Although a rebel head.

ABBOT (*bowing to the KING*).

Would he were here ! we should find one to match him.

KING EDWARD.

There's something in that wish which wakes an echo

Within my bosom. Yet it is as well,

Or better, that The Bruce is in his grave.

We have enough of powerful foes on earth,

No need to summon them from other worlds.

PERCY.

Your Grace ne'er met The Bruce ?

KING EDWARD.

Never himself ; but, in my earliest field,

I did encounter with his famous captains,

Douglas and Randolph. Faith ! they press'd me hard.

ABBOT.

My liege, if I might urge you with a question,

Will the Scots fight to-day ?

KING EDWARD (*sharply*).

Go look your breviary.

CHANDOS (*apart*).

The Abbot has it—Edward will not answer
On that nice point. We must observe his humour.—

[*Addresses the KING.*

Your first campaign, my liege?—That was in Weardale,
When Douglas gave our camp yon midnight ruffle,
And turn'd men's beds to biers.

KING EDWARD.

Ay, by Saint Edward!—I escaped right nearly.
I was a soldier then for holidays,
And slept not in mine armour: my safe rest
Was startled by the cry of Douglas! Douglas!
And by my couch, a grisly chamberlain,
Stood Alan Swinton, with his bloody mace.
It was a churchman saved me—my stout chaplain,
Heaven quit his spirit! caught a weapon up,
And grappled with the giant.—How now, Louis?

Enter an Officer, who whispers the KING.

KING EDWARD.

Say to him,—thus—and thus—— [*Whispers.*

ABBOT.

That Swinton's dead. A monk of ours reported,
Bound homeward from Saint Ninian's pilgrimage,
The Lord of Gordon slew him.

PERCY.

Father, and if your house stood on our borders,
You might have cause to know that Swinton lives,
And is on horseback yet.

CHANDOS.

He slew the Gordon,
That's all the difference—a very trifle.

ABBOT.

'Trifling to those who wage a war more noble
'Than with the arm of flesh.

CHANDOS (*apart*).

The Abbot's vex'd, I'll rub the sore for him.—

(*Aloud.*) I have used that arm of flesh,

And used it sturdily—most reverend Father,

What say you to the chaplain's deed of arms

In the King's tent at Weardale?

ABBOT.

It was most sinful, being against the canon

Prohibiting all churchmen to bear weapons;

And as he fell in that unseemly guise,

Perchance his soul may rue it.

KING EDWARD, (*overhearing the last words*).

Who may rue?

And what is to be rued?

CHANDOS (*apart*).

I'll match his Reverence for the tithes of Everingham.

—The Abbot says, my Liege, the deed was sinful

By which your chaplain, wielding secular weapons,

Secured your Grace's life and liberty,

And that he suffers for't in purgatory.

KING EDWARD, (*to the ABBOT*).

Sayst thou my chaplain is in purgatory?

ABBOT.

It is the canon speaks it, good my Liege.

KING EDWARD.

In purgatory ! thou shalt pray him out on't,

Or I will make thee wish thyself beside him.

ABBOT.

My Lord, perchance his soul is past the aid

Of all the church may do—there is a place

From which there's no redemption.

KING EDWARD.

And if I thought my faithful chaplain there,

Thou shouldst there join him, priest !—Go, watch, fast,
pray,

And let me have such prayers as will storm Heaven—

None of your maim'd and mutter'd hunting masses.

ABBOT (*apart to CHANDOS*).

For God's sake, take him off.

CHANDOS.

Wilt thou compound, then,
The tithes of Everingham?

KING EDWARD.

I tell thee, if thou bear'st the keys of Heaven,
Abbot, thou shalt not turn a bolt with them
'Gainst any well deserving English subject.

ABBOT (*to CHANDOS*).

We will compound, and grant thee, too, a share
I'the next indulgence. Thou dost need it much,
And greatly 'twill avail thee.

CHANDOS.

Enough—we're friends, and when occasion serves,
I will strike in.—

[*Looks as if towards the Scottish Army.*]

KING EDWARD.

Answer, proud Abbot; is my chaplain's soul,
If thou knowest aught on't, in the evil place?

CHANDOS.

My Liege, the Yorkshire men have gain'd the meadow.
I see the pennon green of merry Sherwood.

KING EDWARD.

Then give the signal instant ! We have lost
But too much time already.

ABBOT.

My Liege, your holy chaplain's blessed soul——

KING EDWARD.

To hell with it, and thee ! Is this a time
To speak of monks and chaplains ?

*[Flourish of Trumpets, answered by a distant
sound of Bugles.]*

See, Chandos, Percy—Ha, Saint George ! Saint Edward !
See it descending now, the fatal hail-shower,
The storm of England's wrath—sure, swift, resistless,
Which no mail-coat can brook.—Brave English hearts !
How close they shoot together !—as one eye
Had aim'd five thousand shafts—as if one hand
Had loosed five thousand bow-strings !

PERCY.

The thick volley
Darkens the air, and hides the sun from us.

KING EDWARD.

It falls on those shall see the sun no more.
The winged, the resistless plague is with them.
How their vex'd host is reeling to and fro,
Like the chafed whale with fifty lances in him !
'They do not see, and cannot shun the wound.
The storm is viewless, as death's sable wing,
Unerring as his scythe.

PERCY.

Horses and riders are going down together.
'Tis almost pity to see nobles fall,
And by a peasant's arrow.

BALIOL.

I could weep them,
Although they are my rebels.

CHANDOS (*aside to PERCY*).

His conquerors, he means, who cast him out
From his usurp'd kingdom.—(*Aloud*). 'Tis the worst of it,
'That knights can claim small honour in the field
Which archers win, unaided by our lances.

KING EDWARD.

The battle is not ended. *[Looks towards the field.*
Not ended?—scarce begun! What horse are these,
Rush from the thicket underneath the hill?

PERCY.

They're Hainaulters, the followers of Queen Isabel.

KING EDWARD (*hastily*).

Hainaulters!—thou art blind—wear Hainaulters
Saint Andrew's silver cross?—or would they charge
Full on our archers, and make havoc of them?—
Bruce is alive again—ho, rescue! rescue!—
Who was't surveyed the ground?

RIBAUMONT.

Most royal Liege—

KING EDWARD.

A rose hath fallen from thy chaplet, Ribaumont.

RIBAUMONT.

I'll win it back, or lay my head beside it. *[Exit.*

KING EDWARD.

Saint George! Saint Edward! Gentlemen, to horse,

And to the rescue !—Percy, lead the bill-men ;
Chandos, do thou bring up the men-at-arms.—
If yonder numerous host should now bear down
Bold as their vanguard, (*to the Abbot*), thou mayst pray
for us,
We may need good men's prayers.—To the rescue,
Lords, to the rescue ! ha, Saint George ! Saint Edward !
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

*A part of the Field of Battle betwixt the two Main Armies.
Tumults behind the scenes ; alarms, and cries of " Gordon,
a Gordon," " Swinton," &c.*

Enter, as victorious over the English vanguard, VIPONT.

REYNALD, and others.

VIPONT.

'Tis sweet to hear these war-cries sound together,—
Gordon and Swinton.

REYNALD.

'Tis passing pleasant, yet 'tis strange withal.
Faith, when at first I heard the Gordon's slogan
Sounded so near me, I had nigh struck down
The knave who cried it.

Enter SWINTON and GORDON.

SWINTON.

Pitch down my pennon in yon holly bush.

GORDON.

Mine in the thorn beside it; let them wave,
As fought this morn their masters, side by side.

SWINTON.

Let the men rally, and restore their ranks
Here on this vantage-ground—disorder'd chase
Leads to disorder'd flight; we have done our part,
And if we're succour'd now, Plantagenet
Must turn his bridle southward.
Reynald, spur to the Regent with the basnet
Of stout De Grey, the leader of their vanguard;
Say, that in battle-front the Gordon slew him,
And by that token bid him send us succour.

GORDON.

And tell him that when Selby's headlong charge
Had well nigh borne me down, Sir Alan smote him.
I cannot send his helmet, never nutshell
Went to so many shivers.—Harkye, grooms!

[*To those behind the scenes.*]

Why do you let my noble steed stand stiffening
After so hot a course?

SWINTON.

Ay, breathe your horses, they'll have work anon,
For Edward's men-at-arms will soon be on us,
The flower of England, Gascony, and Flanders;
But with swift succour we will bide them bravely.—
De Vipont, thou look'st sad?

VIPONT.

It is because I hold a Templar's sword
Wet to the crossed hilt with Christian blood.

SWINTON.

The blood of English archers—what can gild
A Scottish blade more bravely?

VIPONT.

Even therefore grieve I for those gallant yeomen,
England's peculiar and appropriate sons,
Known in no other land. Each boasts his hearth
And field as free as the best lord his barony

Owing subjection to no human vassalage,
Save to their King and law. Hence are they resolute,
Leading the van on every day of battle,
As men who know the blessings they defend,
Hence are they frank and generous in peace,
As men who have their portion in its plenty.
No other kingdom shews such worth and happiness
Veil'd in such low estate—therefore I mourn them

SWINTON.

I'll keep my sorrow for our native Scots,
Who, spite of hardship, poverty, oppression,
Still follow to the field their Chieftain's banner,
And die in the defence on't.

GORDON.

And if I live and see my halls again,
They shall have portion in the good they fight for.
Each hardy follower shall have his field,
His household hearth and sod-built home, as free
As ever Southron had. They shall be happy!—

And my Elizabeth shall smile to see it!—

I have betray'd myself.

SWINTON.

Do not believe it.—

Vipont, do thou look out from yonder height,

And see what motion in the Scottish host,

And in King Edward's.—

[*Exit* VIPONT.]

Now will I counsel thee ;

The Templar's ear is for no tale of love,

Being wedded to his Order. But I tell thee,

The brave young knight that hath no lady-love

Is like a lamp unlighted ; his brave deeds,

And its rich painting, do seem then most glorious,

When the pure ray gleams through them.—

Hath thy Elizabeth no other name ?

GORDON.

Must I then speak of her to you, Sir Alan ?

The thought of thee, and of thy matchless strength,

Hath conjured phantoms up amongst her dreams.

The name of Swinton hath been spell sufficient
To chace the rich blood from her lovely cheek,
And would'st thou now know her's?

SWINTON.

I would, nay must.

Thy father in the paths of chivalry,
Should know the load-star thou dost rule thy course by.

GORDON.

Nay, then, her name is—hark—— [*Whispers.*

SWINTON.

I know it well, that ancient northern house.

GORDON.

O, thou shalt see its fairest grace and honour
In my Elizabeth. And if music touch thee——

SWINTON.

It did, before disasters had untuned me.

GORDON.

O, her notes
Shall hush each sad remembrance to oblivion,
Or melt them to such gentleness of feeling,

That grief shall have its sweetness. Who, but she,
Knows the wild harpings of our native land?
Whether they lull the shepherd on his hill,
Or wake the knight to battle; rouse to merriment,
Or sooth to sadness; she can touch each mood.
Princes and statesmen, chiefs renown'd in arms,
And grey-hair'd bards, contend which shall the first
And choicest homage render to the enchantress.

SWINTON.

You speak her talent bravely.

GORDON.

Though you smile,
I do not speak it half. Her gift creative,
New measures adds to every air she wakes;
Varying and gracing it with liquid sweetness,
Like the wild modulation of the lark,
Now leaving, now returning to the strain!
To listen to her, is to seem to wander
In some enchanted labyrinth of romance,
Whence nothing but the lovely fairy's will,

Who wove the spell, can extricate the wanderer.

Methinks, I hear her now !—

SWINTON.

Bless'd privilege

Of youth ! There's scarce three minutes to decide

'Twixt death and life, 'twixt triumph and defeat,

Yet all his thoughts are in his lady's bower,

List'ning her harping !——

Enter VIPONT.

Where are thine, De Vipont ?

VIPONT.

On death—on judgment—on eternity

For time is over with us.

SWINTON.

There moves not, then, one pennon to our aid,

Of all that flutter yonder ?

VIPONT.

From the main English host come rushing forward

Pennons enow—ay, and their Royal Standard.

But ours stand rooted, as for crows to roost on.

SWINTON (*to himself*).

I'll rescue him at least.—Young Lord of Gordon,

Spur to the Regent—shew the instant need——

GORDON.

I penetrate thy purpose ; but I go not.

SWINTON.

Not at my bidding ? I, thy sire in chivalry—

Thy leader in the battle ?—I command thee.

GORDON.

No, thou wilt not command me seek my safety,—

For such is thy kind meaning,—at the expence

Of the last hope which Heaven reserves for Scotland.

While I abide, no follower of mine

Will turn his rein for life ; but were I gone,

What power can stay them ? and, our band dispersed,

What swords shall for an instant stem yon host,

And save the latest chance for victory ?

VIPONT.

The noble youth speaks truth ; and were he gone,
There will not twenty spears be left with us.

GORDON.

No, bravely as we have begun the field,
So let us fight it out. The Regent's eyes,
More certain than a thousand messages,
Shall see us stand, the barrier of his host
Against yon bursting storm. If not for honour,
If not for warlike rule, for shame at least,
He must bear down to aid us.

SWINTON.

Must it be so ?

And am I forced to yield the sad consent,
Devoting thy young life ? O, Gordon, Gordon !
I do it as the patriarch doom'd his issue :
I at my country's, he at Heaven's command ;
But I seek vainly some atoning sacrifice,
Rather than such a victim !—(*Trumpets.*) Hark, they come !
That music sounds not like thy lady's lute.

GORDON.

Yet shall my lady's name mix with it gaily.—

Mount, vassals, couch your lances, and cry, “Gordon!

Gordon for Scotland and Elizabeth!”

[*Excunt. Lowl alarum*

SCENE III.

*Another part of the Field of Battle, adjacent to the former
Scene.*

Alarums. Enter SWINTON, followed by HOB HATTELY.

SWINTON.

Stand to it yet ! The man who flies to-day,
May bastards warm them at his household hearth !

HOB HATTELY.

That ne'er shall be my curse. My Magdalen
Is trusty as my broadsword.

SWINTON.

Ha, thou knave,
Art thou dismounted too ?

HOB HATTELY.

I know, Sir Alan,
You want no homeward guide ; so threw my reins
Upon my palfrey's neck, and let him loose.
Within an hour he stands before my gate ;
And Magdalen will need no other token
To bid the Melrose Monks say masses for me.

SWINTON.

'Thou art resolved to cheat the halter, then ?

HOB HATTELY.

It is my purpose,
Having lived a thief, to die a brave man's death ;
And never had I a more glorious chance for't.

SWINTON.

Here lies the way to it, knave.—Make in, make in,
And aid young Gordon !

[*Exeunt. Loud and long alarums. After
which the back Scene rises, and disco-
vers SWINTON on the ground, GORDON
supporting him ; both much wounded.*

SWINTON.

All are cut down—the reapers have pass'd o'er us,
And hie to distant harvest.—My toil's over ;
'There lies my sickle. [*dropping his sword,*] Hand of mine
again
Shall never, never wield it !

GORDON.

O valiant leader, is thy light extinguish'd !
'That only beacon-flame which promised safety
In this day's deadly wrack !

SWINTON.

My lamp hath long been dim. But thine, young Gordon,
Just kindled, to be quench'd so suddenly,
Ere Scotland saw its splendour !——

GORDON.

Five thousand horse hung idly on yon hill,
Saw us o'erpower'd, and no one stirr'd to aid us !

SWINTON.

It was the Regent's envy—Out !—alas !

Why blame I him?—It was our civil discord,
Our selfish vanity, our jealous hatred,
Which framed this day of dole for our poor country.—
Had thy brave father held yon leading staff,
As well his rank and valour might have claim'd it,
We had not fall'n unaided.—How, O how
Is he to answer it, whose deed prevented !

GORDON.

Alas ! alas ! the author of the death-feud,
He has his reckoning too ! for had your sons
And num'rous vassals lived, we had lack'd no aid.

SWINTON.

May God assoil the dead, and him who follows !—
We've drank the poison'd beverage which we brew'd ;
Have sown the wind, and reap'd the tenfold whirlwind !—
But thou, brave youth, whose nobleness of heart
Pour'd oil upon the wounds our hate inflicted ;
Thou, who hast done no wrong, need'st no forgiveness,—
Why should'st thou share our punishment !

GORDON.

All need forgiveness—[*distant alarum*].—Hark ! in yonder shout

Did the main battles' counter !—

SWINTON.

Look on the field, brave Gordon, if thou can'st,

And tell me how the day goes.—But I guess,

'Too surely do I guess——

GORDON.

All's lost ! all's lost !—Of the main Scottish host,

Some wildly fly, and some rush wildly forward ;

And some there are who seem to turn their spears

Against their countrymen.

SWINTON.

Rashness, and cowardice, and secret treason,

Combine to ruin us ; and our hot valour,

Devoid of discipline, is madmen's strength,

More fatal unto friends than enemies !

I'm glad that these dim eyes shall see no more on't.—

Let thy hand close them, Gordon—I will think
My Fair-hair'd William renders me that office ! [Dies.

GORDON.

And, Swinton, I will think I do that duty
To my dead father.

Enter DE VIPONT.

VIPONT.

Fly, fly, brave youth !—A handful of thy followers,
The scatter'd gleanings of this desperate day,
Still hover yonder to essay thy rescue.—
O linger not !—I'll be your guide to them.

GORDON.

Look there, and bid me fly !—The oak has fallen ;
And the young ivy bush, which learn'd to climb
By its support, must needs partake its fall.

VIPONT.

Swinton ? Alas ! the best, the bravest, strongest,
And sagest of our Scottish chivalry !

Forgive one moment, if to save the living,
My tongue should wrong the dead.—Gordon, bethink
thee,

Thou dost but stay to perish with the corpse
Of him who slew thy father.

GORDON.

Ay, but he was my sire in chivalry.
He taught my youth to soar above the promptings
Of mean and selfish vengeance ; gave my youth
A name that shall not die even on this death-spot.
Records shall tell this field had not been lost,
Had all men fought like Swinton and like Gordon.

[*Trumpets.*

Save thee, De Vipont—Hark ! the Southron trumpets.

VIPONT.

Nay, without thee I stir not.

Enter EDWARD, CHANDOS, PERCY, BALIOL, &c.

GORDON.

Ay, they come on, the Tyrant and the Traitor,

Workman and tool, Plantagenet and Baliol.

O for a moment's strength in this poor arm,

To do one glorious deed !

[*He rushes on the English, but is made prisoner with VIPONT.*]

KING EDWARD.

Disarm them—harm them not ; though it was they

Made havoc on the archers of our vanguard.

'They and that bulky champion. Where is he ?

CHANDOS.

Here lies the giant ! Say his name, young Knight ?

GORDON.

Let it suffice, he was a man this morning.

CHANDOS.

I question'd thee in sport. I do not need

Thy information, youth. Who that has fought

Through all these Scottish wars, but knows that crest,

The sable boar chain'd to the leafy oak,

And that huge mace still seen where war was wildest !

KING EDWARD.

'Tis Alan Swinton !

Grim chamberlain, who in my tent at Weardale,
Stood by my startled couch with torch and mace,
When the Black Douglas' war-cry waked my camp.

GORDON (*sinking down*).

If thus thou know'st him,
Thou wilt respect his corpse.

KING EDWARD.

As belted Knight and crowned King, I will.

GORDON.

And let mine
Sleep at his side, in token that our death
Ended the feud of Swinton and of Gordon.

KING EDWARD.

It is the Gordon !—Is there aught beside
Edward can do to honour bravery,
Even an enemy ?

GORDON.

Nothing but this:

Let not base Baliol, with his touch or look,
Profane my corpse or Swinton's. I've some breath still,
Enough to say—Scotland—Elizabeth. [Dies.

CHANDOS.

Baliol, I would not brook such dying looks,
To buy the crown you aim at.

KING EDWARD (*to VIPONT.*)

Vipont, thy crossed shield shews ill in warfare
Against a Christian king.

VIPONT.

That Christian King is warring upon Scotland.
I was a Scotsman ere I was a Templar,
Sworn to my country ere I knew my Order.

KING EDWARD.

I will but know thee as a Christian champion,
And set thee free unransom'd.

Enter ABBOT OF WALTHAMSTOW.

ABBOT.

Heaven grant your Majesty
Many such glorious days as this has been !

KING EDWARD.

It is a day of much advantage ;
Glorious it might have been, had all our foes
Fought like these two brave champions.—Strike the drums,
Sound trumpets, and pursue the fugitives,
Till the Tweed's eddies overwhelm them. Berwick's render'd—

These wars, I trust, will soon find lasting close.

THE END.

NOTES.

Note I. p. 86.

A rose has fallen from thy chaplet.

The well-known expression by which Robert Bruce censured the negligence of Randolph, for permitting an English body of cavalry to pass his flank on the day preceding the battle of Bannockburn.

Note II. p. 108.

I was a Scotsman ere I was a Templar.

A Venetian General, observing his soldiers testified some unwillingness to fight against those of the Pope, whom they regarded as Father of the Church, addressed them in terms of similar encouragement,—“ Fight on ! we were Venetians before we were Christians.”

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